

How to prepare your organisation to support colleagues in light of increasing external racial tension

As a Coalition, we are committed to supporting our members and their workforce across the region to ensure that workplaces remain a safe place for everyone. We are seeing increasing tension building across our communities, influenced by culture wars, polarisation and other global factors. It's important that organisations maintain and re-iterate a zero-tolerance approach to, discrimination, racism and religious hatred and ensure they are addressing any arising issues appropriately.

Racism is when a person is treated worse, excluded, disadvantaged, harassed, bullied, humiliated, or degraded because of their race or ethnicity.

Religious Hatred refers to the hostility, antagonism, dislike or enmity shown towards a person or group of people because of their religious beliefs or affiliation.

Whilst this guide is intended to provide some practical steps in response to unrest, it also serves as a tool to support organisations in implementing some essential processes and mechanisms to help create a safe environment for colleagues within the workplace.

Immediate planning in response to unrest

It is important to assess any situation, prioritising the safety of colleagues as the critical first step. This can include putting emergency measures in place, such as allowing colleagues to work from home, to avoid travelling to or through areas where unrest is expected.

To ensure that your response meets the needs of the colleagues within your organisation, it is important to engage relevant stakeholders in your planning, obtaining feedback from colleague networks/employee resource groups, colleague forums, trade union representatives or similar.

Below are some examples of scenarios where colleagues may need support, but this is not an exhaustive list:

1. Colleagues have experienced racism or are affected by racism from outside of the workplace.
2. Colleagues have experienced racism within the workplace from other colleagues – organisations need to ensure that there is a zero-tolerance approach to racist behaviour.
3. Colleagues have experienced racism within the workplace from service users or members of the public.
4. Colleagues are supporting family members who have experienced racism.
5. Colleagues have witnessed friends or co-workers subjected to racism